

Winter 97 quiz

Identify author and title then discuss the passage in relation to the essay as a whole, and its significance to film theory. Explain the meaning or significance of any underlined words.

1. Only the contrapuntal use of sound vis-à-vis the visual fragment of montage will open up new possibilities for the development and perfection of montage. The first experiments in sound must aim at a sharp discord with the visual images.

Eisenstein, (Pudovkin, Alexandrov) Statement on sound
'sound as continuation of montage rather than for 'realist' matching or enhancing
'runs counter to Hollywood, mainstream narrative cinema
'underlines conventional nature of cinematic construction
'predicts E's later use of sound

2. So why tell stories, narratives which always assume a chronology, sequential events, a gradation in facts and feelings?...There are no stories. There never have been stories. There are only situations.

Epstein, 'The Senses (b)'
'vs. theatrical, narrative driven cinema
'situations or moments are more suited to cinema, more compelling than stories
'an example of his concern with the photogenic, the inherently cinematic

3. [The movie theaters] should rid their offerings of all trappings that deprive film of its rights and must aim radically toward a kind of distraction that exposes disintegration instead of masking it.

Kracauer, Cult of Distraction

'distraction: a.) the modern urban, capitalist situation of people--many sense impressions surround them (modern life), and
b) the state of being distracted from important things--amusement, frivolity
'most film/cinema covers over distraction, but should expose social decay (a social agenda) rather than cover it up.

4. From the above one can reach the following conclusion: in cinema we have the semantics of the shots and the semantics of montage. Taken in isolation, the semantics of a shot as such rarely stands out; however, certain details in the composition of shots (those details linked to photogenic properties) sometimes can have independent semantic significance. But of course, the basic semantic role belongs to montage, since it is precisely montage which colors the shots with definite semantic nuances in addition to their general sense. There are well-known examples of film-editing where the very same shots, placed in a new montage 'context,' take on completely new meaning.

5. Comment on this quote (which was not in the assigned readings) and relate it ideas developed so far in the course:

Art also differs from handicraft; the first is called 'free,' the other may be called 'mercenary.' We regard the first as if it could only prove purposive as play, i.e., as occupation that is pleasant in itself. But the second is regarded as if it could only be compulsorily imposed upon one as work, i.e., as occupation which is unpleasant (a trouble) in itself and which is only attractive on account of its effect (e.g., the wage)....

Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgement

(mercenary=done for money, such as a mercenary soldier who doesn't fight for the cause, or loyalty, or citizenship, but because he is being paid to fight)